(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the action taken/proposed to be taken by Government to recover the tax arrears and the action taken against officials responsible for these losses of service tax; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to improve the Service Tax realisation system/mechanism?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN) : (a) and (b) No. All the private channels are paying the Service Tax due on broadcasting services. With regards to Doordarshan the Attorney General and Solicitor General have opined that in view of Section 22 of Prasar Bharati Act, no service tax was leviable on them. During the previous year 214 service providers have registered under Service Tax law for providing broadcasting services and have paid the service tax due from them.

(c) No tax arrears are due to be recovered. In view of reply (a), no officer is responsible for any loss of service tax.

(d) To improve the service tax realisation system/mechanism a effective monitoring system has been introduced. All the Commissioners responsible for collection of service tax have been advised to make action plan for the same. Government has also launched a campaign to educate the service providers about their responsibilities and liabilities in this regard through advertisements in the print media and on Radio & T.V. The steps have been taken to rationalise the tax collection procedure and also penal provisions have been introduced in case of failure to comply with the provision of Service Tax Law.

Allocation of funds for setting up of media cell

3299. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) in the face of severe resource crunch being faced by the Finance Ministry, how far its allocation of Rs. 75 crores per annum for setting up a media cell of its own like External Publicity Division of EA Ministry is justified; and

(b) what additional benefits are likely to accrue and whether such a move will not promote a chain reaction in other Ministries to set up their media cells?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) No such provision has been made in the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Finance for the year 2003-04.

(b) Does not arise.

LIC pension scheme for private sector

†3300. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal with Government to allow the pension scheme of Life Insurance Corporation of India for the private sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) to (c) The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)have informed that they sell pension schemes both on individual as well as group basis. At present, LIC offers 3 individual pension plans as below:—

(i) New Jeevan Akshaya–I;

(ii) New Jeevan Dhara–I; and

(iii) New Jeevan Suraksha–I

The Group Superannuation Schemes for Employer-Employee Groups are available both on Money Purchase Basis as well as Benefit Purchase basis. Besides LIC also administers the Group Superannuation Scheme on Group Annuity Basis in cases where the trustees manage the scheme/ fund during the deferment period/service period/active life time and on retirement the annuities or pensions are purchased through LIC in respect of those individuals. All these pension schemes are available both for public and private sector. A new pension scheme for senior citizens viz. Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana has been announced by the Government in the budget for 2003-04. This scheme is to be operated by the LIC. Details of this scheme are being finalised.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.